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ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers in Tasmania, this booklet discusses the role of parents and the home in language development as an integral and important part of a school's language program. The booklet suggests that schools need to determine the best way to communicate to parents: how important parents are to the early development of children's language; how schools attempt to build on children's experiences throughout the different grade levels and in the various curriculum areas; and how parents can complement and continue the work of the school. It explores some of the many aspects of a school's language program and how such aspects originate from, and relate back to, the home. The booklet's four chapters are: Adults as Models; Encouraging Language Development; All Lessons Are Language Lessons; and Communicating with Parents. Numerous black and white photographs illustrate the text. (MG)

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PARENTS, CHILDREN AND LANGUAGE

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Children and Language

PARENTS, CHILDREN AND LANGUAGE

Education Department, Tasmania

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Introduction

The role of parents and the home in language development should be considered an integral and important part of a school's language program.

Schools need to determine the best way to communicate to parents:

- how important parents are to the early development of children's language;
- how schools attempt to build on children's experiences throughout the different grade levels and in the various curriculum areas;
- how parents can complement and continue the work of the school.

Because each school, its children and its community are unique, this book can only attempt to explore some of the many aspects that may be a part of a school's language program — and how such aspects originate from, and relate back to, the home.

It is hoped that this book will help teachers and schools in the difficult but challenging task of developing communication between teacher and parent, home and school.

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1 Adults as models

The child who comes to school has already accomplished the remarkable feat of learning a language. This accomplishment is often taken for granted yet, with few exceptions, most children do it. Moreover, they seem to do it with ease: without lessons, without tests, without anyone explaining the complexities of the grammatical structures or the ambiguity of words. When they have grown to adulthood, most people find it impossible to duplicate this learning task.

Recently, researchers, scientists and educators have been examining what it is in the child's early years that leads to such an extraordinary accomplishment. The findings have revealed that parents are the important teachers in this process. Obviously, a parent or caring adult was there doing what most people enjoy doing: *talking*. This fact has implications for all parents and teachers in the ensuing school years of a child's life.

Children enter the world immersed in language. Eager adults are waiting to engage the new baby in long conversations. In a very short time, the baby, too, is babbling away at a remarkable

rate. Such babbling approximates talk and has a recognisable pattern and rhythm to it. At times, the baby will even seem to initiate conversation.

Through talk, parents intuitively and naturally model the structures of our language. The baby reciprocates, approximates and copies as this modelling continues. The value of parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents and friends in promoting language growth is obvious, but the necessity to provide models in the other areas of language, such as reading and writing, is sometimes not so obvious to parents and teachers.

Schools are often asked why teachers still read aloud to older children in primary and secondary schools. One reason is that people do not talk like books. Besides learning the language of talk, children need to acquire another kind of language in order to facilitate the process of reading. This is often called 'book language'. In the child's early years, parents have been wonderful teachers and models by reading books to their children. Eventually, after enjoying many, many books on a parent's lap, children can be seen and heard pretending to read by themselves, using recognisable patterns and rhythms. By acquiring this 'book talk' children have already started the reading process. This familiarity with book language will help them in the future as they begin to predict or guess at words, phrases or parts of stories.

This valuable sharing of books, initiated by parents in the early years, is continued by teachers throughout the primary school. Sharing books with children by reading aloud to them ensures their early exposure to written language patterns and grammatical structures and helps them to become aware of ambiguity, double meanings, metaphor, personification and other uses of language. This makes it easier for children in their future reading. Even older children who have left primary school find that sharing a book with an adult helps facilitate their understanding of difficult material.

If there are obvious benefits to be gained from modelling the language of talk and reading, equal benefits can be gained from modelling in the area of language we call 'writing'. Researchers have found this area to be no different. As in speaking and reading, children who see adults modelling writing will start to copy and imitate. From watching adults or older children write letters, notes, directions or stories, children will start to write or

'pretend to write'. Unfortunately, children are less frequently exposed to the writing model than to the talking and reading model.

There needs to be a conscious effort by all adults, both in the home and the school, to make visible our adult skills. Writing up daily news or class stories is an activity that was once found only in the junior grades but, increasingly, teachers of older children are discovering the value of adult modelling. All children need to see adults reading silently, reading aloud, telling a story, writing a letter, trying to compose a story, editing, joining in a role-play situation, attempting to spell an unknown word, painting a picture, answering the telephone or writing directions, e.g. for a new physical education game. Research in child development has shown that modelling is a very frequent event and, even though the presence of the teacher or the parent can never be replaced, other children and adults in the school and the community can help provide insights and models. Dance and drama groups, parents or older children who scribe letters or stories and read to children, grandparents who tell stories, writers who explain their craft to a class — all provide children with valuable language experiences.

Schools need to communicate to parents how valuable their modelling role was in the child's early years, and how important it is for teachers in the school and for parents in the home to continue modelling language use.

2 Encouraging language development

Important as it is, modelling alone will not foster growth. A baby left alone with a tape recorder or a television will not learn to speak. There also needs to be love, affection and security for the child. At every stage in a child's development, the adult, parent or teacher needs to take time to respond with warmth, affection, praise or encouragement. Indeed, many studies of education have shown that the relationship existing in a classroom between the adult and the child is one of the most important variables associated with the child's growth.

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The parent or teacher's responses to a child's first attempts are vital. When a child makes the first approximations of speech, the parents react positively by displaying pleasure, grinning, laughing, hugging or kissing the child. Approximating is part of the process of acquiring speech and parents seem intuitively to understand this. If the processes involved in reading and writing can also be understood, the correct response to the child's first attempts to read and write will follow automatically.

The following example illustrates how approximation works as children learn to talk. When a child says, 'Is sa at', the utterance is recognised as an approximation of 'It's a cat'. Adults readily accept such approximating, as well as making mistakes, inventing words and guessing, as a natural part of a child's early speech development. Approximation is very clever. It gets a positive reaction and this positive reaction is clearly, and often demonstratively, conveyed to the child. Without such encouragement, the child may not continue taking risks and making guesses.

As well as rewarding approximation, the adult provides an 'immediate feedback service' allowing the child to confirm or reject hypotheses. The reaction of the adult when the child points to a picture of a cat and says 'cat' informs the child that the hypothesis was correct. If the child says 'dog', the adult's response will be different.

The adult also provides an elaboration service. The response to 'at' becomes 'cat', then may become: 'Yes, darling. It's a cat.'. 'Go shop' evokes the elaboration: 'Daddy's going down to the shop.' The child's language will accumulate and become more elaborated and refined according to the response of the adult. Willingness to take risks, to form hypotheses, to deduct, to reason and to learn are all part of language development and depend upon the positive response and help given by the adult.

As in modelling, these observations of children's early language development contain implications for schools. The teacher's response, like the parent's, is vital in encouraging risk-taking and in providing elaboration and an 'immediate feedback service'. A child may logically and cleverly extrapolate a grammatical rule, as in 'she breaked my doll' or 'he ranned to the shop'. It is much simpler and easier for the child if the adult responds in the form of an elaboration: 'She broke your doll, did she?' or 'Oh, he ran to the shop?'. Such responses are preferable to negative, risk-stopping, grammatical criticism such as, 'It isn't *breaked*, it's broke.'

How do teachers provide this 'immediate feedback service' to all children? The best and easiest way to allow children's hypotheses to be confirmed, modified or rejected is to let children talk: talk to one another, talk to older and younger children and talk to other adults. Keeping children quiet will stop the immediate feedback avenue. Many schools and teachers deliberately provide situations for more talk: displays, excursions, discussion groups, writing workshops and home corners, to name but a few.

Parents may see this policy as being dramatically different from when they went to school. However, when they realise the role they played in using talk in the early years of a child's life, they can understand more clearly why schools wish to continue using this proven and powerful medium for learning.

Similarly, there is a need to understand the role of risk-taking in reading and writing. Here again, parents and teachers can provide a positive atmosphere that allows children's confidence and self-esteem to grow. Knowing what's involved in the processes of reading and writing can help teachers and parents to provide this positive atmosphere.

As with speech, helping the child learn to read involves modelling, praising early approximations, encouraging the child to pretend to read and providing the child with a varied range of experiences involving adults, other children, places, books, films and even television. Again, as with speech, these processes continue through the grades, with good readers continuing to do what made them good readers in the first place: guessing, taking risks, making mistakes on unfamiliar words and reading fast to get the meaning rather than stumbling and slowing up to be correct.

In writing, too, modelling will have helped children to develop the insight that print has meaning, that print goes from left to right and that one person's writing can become another person's reading. The early squiggles children make are attempts to write. The parent's response will foster these early approximations, squiggles and guesses as the child is continually encouraged to write and gradually refines and modifies 'invented spelling and writing'. The child who gets a negative response to a page of squiggles, reversals, mixtures of upper and lower case letters, and invented spelling will stop taking risks and that child's self-initiated learning will stop.

Parents need to understand the role of risk-taking in the early years and realise the value of teachers continuing the process in school. Some of the aims of the school are to provide the right atmosphere, to know what the process of risk-taking involves and to appreciate, as parents do, the individuality of the child and of the child's temperament, frustration level and other needs.

If this knowledge is communicated to parents it becomes easier for teachers to explain:

- why children's writing has sometimes none, sometimes a few and sometimes all of the spelling errors marked out;
- why children are sometimes encouraged to self-correct, edit and re-draft;
- why children's own written work is often used as the basis for spelling programs;
- **why risk-taking and making mistakes are part of the learning process from infancy right through life.**

Talking, reading, writing: acquiring the skills by practising the processes

For a child, the task of acquiring speech seems to be relatively simple. Linguists know, of course, that language acquisition is a very complex process. Nevertheless, once the psychological and social factors exist to provide a positive atmosphere, the child simply learns the process by practising it; that is, a child learns to speak by speaking. It would complicate and confuse children if speech had first to be broken down into its component parts and practice given in using, identifying and recognising those separate parts. It would compound the confusion if children then had to have lessons in the many complicated rules for reassembling those parts.

Children can understand 'Good boys eat vegetables; eat them. That's a good boy!' without being lumbered with an explanation such as 'the objective case is used if the pronoun in the phrase follows a preposition, demonstrative adjective, transitive or intransitive verb'.

Parents would be the first to realise that such teaching methods were confusing and made a simple process unnecessarily complicated. Learning problems would increase as children failed to master the system of explanations. Children having such problems would see themselves as failures. Self-esteem, confidence and willingness to learn would plummet.

Parents would be the first to argue that children should learn to speak by speaking, listening, taking risks, making approximations, guessing and then gradually refining and improving upon the first attempts. The next step for parents is to become aware of the parallels which exist in learning to read and write.

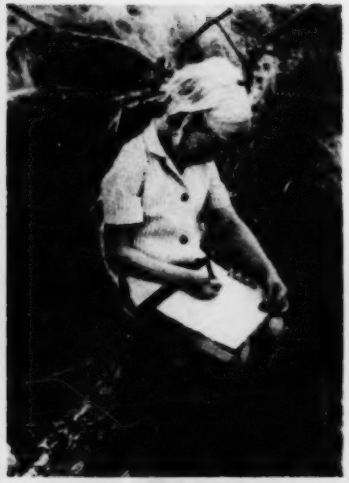
Children acquire language skills in a global sense. Although the individual word may seem to be a starting point, it is actually learned within a 'chunk' of language, with the parent elaborating but keeping the word in context ('Dog...yes, that's a dog'). Children's early babblings seem to be chunks of patterns and rhythms which soon develop into chunks of identifiable speech. Similarly, successful readers find it easier to take chunks of words, keeping them, too, in context ('Which word in the story says *doing*?'). To attempt to teach one hundred and seventy phonic rules and their many complicated permutations of reassembly would be time consuming and confusing for the child. Getting at words within the context promotes a view of reading that makes it easier for the child to get meaning from the print. It also makes the reading task itself more purposeful for the child.

Writing, like talking and reading, is a language skill that children acquire in context. Successful young writers are 'pen and pencil kids' who display an eagerness to pretend to write, who take chunks of 'writing-language' and who make up sentences that include invented spellings, letter reversals and many mistakes. There is a sense of purpose and a reason for writing and, because of the response of their adult audience, these children are confident in taking risks and attempting more adult forms of writing. These young writers learn to write by practising writing and not by fragmenting it into sub-skills or reducing it to isolated exercises.

This view of language development applies to all forms of language use, both in the early years of childhood and, later, in the school years. Children learn to speak by speaking, learn to read by reading and learn to write by writing. Although deceptively simple, these are very important statements that need careful thought and explanation, particularly when communicating with parents. Once parents become aware of the process of language development, they can appreciate its implications for teaching practices and learning programs.

3 All lessons are language lessons

Good teaching practices not only recognise the importance of not fragmenting language into 'little bits', they also recognise the importance of *interacting* — of allowing the various forms of language to operate alongside and within social science, science, mathematics, art, sport, drama and other areas of the curriculum. The social science lesson can initiate or incorporate writing, spelling, discussion, drama and reading. Similarly, the science lesson can become 'two lessons in one' when spelling, writing, grammar and talking skills complement the scientific



skills of observing, thinking and recording data. Such a practical use of language helps children to understand that language is about something, it involves people and it is always for a purpose. Children can come to appreciate that language has content, audience and purpose as they engage in activities such as writing the rules for a colony, discussing how to build a town, writing a letter to a newspaper, finding out how to make gunshot, setting up an aquarium or even venting their feelings about injustices through writing a story, poem or song.

Communicating to parents the benefits of using language in *real* situations reduces the 'future shock' parents may experience as they compare the subdued atmosphere of yesterday's schools with today's 'language classrooms'. Today's reading and writing lessons may involve children in dramatising a story about a 'used car yard' or pretending to be lions leaping about the jungle, as well as in sustained quiet reading or writing sessions.

Parents need explanations about the kinds of teaching practices that are based on an understanding of language development. For example, it may be necessary to explain to parents:

- how classroom interaction contributes to children's language development;
- how role-play allows children to see the effects of their behaviour on others and to respond themselves;
- how *cloze* reading exercises can help children to concentrate on reading for the meaning of a text;
- how simulation games help children to refine their thinking processes and make decisions;
- why children are encouraged to talk and discuss while writing;
- how 'play' situations such as shadow puppetry can relate to spelling or to other formal language skills.

School activities may also involve parents by stimulating discussion at home. For example, a child who is formulating 'Rules for the new colony' while preparing for a class drama may involve the whole family in the discussion. This will help both parents and the child to view language as a global process belonging to all lessons and all areas of the curriculum.

Experiences and connections

Children need many experiences for language to develop. It is parents who first involve children in the situations that allow them to build up a bank of experiences. Some experiences are firsthand experiences of other people and other places. Visiting a farm, helping to water the garden or helping Dad with the cooking can lead to the development of ideas and talk about animals, about air pressure or about temperature. Other experiences involve children vicariously but still offer opportunities for language development. Reading about panzer tanks, for example, may lead to connections about gears and ratios; a conversation with a friend may provide a child with information about totem poles.

Experiences such as these are very important in allowing children to develop their vocabulary and the skills of language use. They also provide opportunities for intellectual growth through reasoning and making connections. Not only do these experiences have their effect at the time they are happening, but later recollections will facilitate children's reading and writing. The knowledge about ducks acquired during a visit to a farm may help a child to predict the next line in a page of reading, add depth to a child's piece of writing or help a child to understand a concept such as amphibious mobility.

Such is the importance of experiences in a child's early development that schools continue giving children access to a

variety of people, places and events. In some cases, children may need to return again and again to the same experience throughout their lives. For example, a sixth grader will benefit as much as a grade one child from a visit to a farm. Similarly, playing with blocks can provide children of all ages with opportunities for talk, imaginative play and problem-solving, as well as help them to accumulate a mathematical and scientific vocabulary.

Where parents share teachers' knowledge about the processes of intellectual and language development, the child's home environment is likely to be rich in the experiences and talk that contribute to such development.

Helping *all* children

'Am I doing the right thing?'

'I've tried to be a good parent. I've always read to my child. I've never pressured him but he's six and a half now. Isn't there something I can do to help?'

'Johnny's spelling is atrocious and even though I agree with what you're trying to do in class, isn't there something I can do at home?'

Teachers often use the analogy of children learning to walk to explain to parents that all children are individuals and acquire competency in speaking, reading and writing — like competency in walking — at different rates. Sometimes parents give this argument a nod of acceptance but retain a wrinkle of doubt and worry as to how best to use their time and efforts with their children.

It is important for parents and schools to understand the processes involved in 'remedial' education. The messages contained in the books in this series are just as relevant for children who are slow to learn. Many teachers, aware of the importance of the emotional, self-esteem factors in child development and of the implications of the report of the Committee on Primary Education in Tasmania (*The COPE*

Report, 1980), have re-examined remedial practices in their schools. The nomenclature of remediation, ability grouping, streaming and the withdrawal of children from classrooms have all been subjected to such re-examination.

In the past there has been a tendency to treat children with learning problems differently. Often, instead of giving these children the very things that would help them to succeed, teachers have given them isolated, fragmentary tasks. Breaking language into 'little bits', rote learning of the many phonic combinations, rules and exceptions — all of these may make remedial learning complicated and, often, meaningless. To apply such methods may compound their problems when these children most need learning to be uncomplicated and meaningful. There can be value in isolating a child's difficulties, but teachers need to put the child's problems and mistakes back into a total language context.

Schools should develop their own individual programs for children with learning difficulties. Collaboration between parents and teachers is essential to ensure that the child's 'special' programs are based on the principles of language development already outlined in the earlier pages of this book. Making mistakes, taking risks and using appropriate language strategies are just as important, if not more important, in 'remedial' programs. There needs to be a certain degree of 'pretend reading and writing' and of observing adult models. Teachers must take a positive approach in identifying and working on weaknesses; they must give all children opportunities to experience success and must not allow children to see themselves as failures. For example, a book from the class reading scheme may not always be suitable for a particular child. Asking a child to read the next page of the book at home may have the child reading at a frustration level of difficulty to the most important person in that child's life. Communicating to a parent how to 'share' a book with a child may be more beneficial to both of them.

The one-to-one relationship with an adult and the nature of the psychological and social interaction between them are among the most influential factors in a child's learning. This relationship and the obvious learning it spawns are features of the child's early years. To foster warm, one-to-one relationships as a basis for learning during the school years, teachers need to find ways of involving parents in the school's learning programs.

The most appropriate person to give encouragement and affection to the child is the parent because it is to the parent that the child desperately wants to demonstrate improvement and success. Schools can initiate programs based on the relationship between parent and child only if there is good communication between the home and the school.

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4 Communicating with parents

Today's parents are generally more aware of the value of talking and reading to their children, of giving children a variety of experiences and of allowing children to scribble and pretend to write. In the past, parents did not recognise the important role they played in their children's language development. They often felt they should ignore children's early babblings ('Don't give in ... make him say the words!') Or they didn't realise that their reading to children was a part of the reading process ('If you want to read it, read it yourself'). Schools need to develop many avenues of communication with parents to

counteract this 'sink or swim' mentality, to create a greater awareness of how parents can help in the early years and during the school years, and to explain today's teaching practices.

Previous sections of this book have focused on what should be communicated to parents:

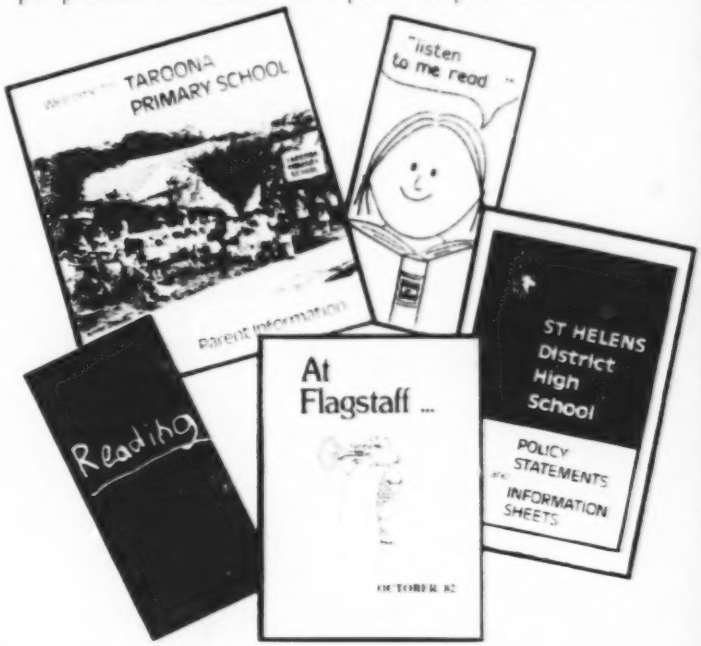
- the importance of the parents' role in early development;
- the research and theory that have developed from these early observations;
- the way schools build on and continue children's successful learning strategies;
- the continued involvement of parents during the school years.

All these aspects must be viewed as interrelated. Bearing all these factors in mind, individual schools have to determine how best they can communicate with parents and the immediate community.

Firstly, teachers themselves must have a good knowledge of the processes involved in the acquisition of the many language forms. Individual reading of selected texts and subsequent discussion with the school's other members of staff and attendance at in-service language programs are recommended ways teachers can become more knowledgeable about children's language development.

Following this awareness period, teachers will want to refine their teaching strategies and observe the various language forms in their classrooms. A school's staff may accept the challenge of rewriting, modifying or refining their existing language programs.

Once teachers feel secure in their ability to discuss the principles of language development, communication to parents may begin. Initial contact may be on a very personal basis or through larger, whole-staff programs.

Staff members, individually or in small groups, can produce aids presenting the school's policy. These aids can include small pamphlets, a booklet, a series of posters, a question-and-answer

book, coloured slides of activities around the school, a display of black and white photographs in the foyer or an audio tape.

The process of making such aids adds to the professional development and interaction of staff members. These aids will be invaluable, not only to parents, but also to auxiliary staff, part-time teachers, new teachers and other adults involved in the school's programs.

A program for parents about language development can be introduced with parent workshops. These workshops could involve parents in playing a simulated reading or spelling game or watching a slide show with a guest speaker.

A question-and-answer book for parents can be produced. Staff meetings can organise a sequential method of sending out the mini-pamphlets or letters or the questionnaire sheets needed for the preparation of such a book. Display posters around the school can be organised to support this and other parent material.

Teachers can attach explanatory letters to children's spelling, writing or reading books. Children's work can be strategically placed around an informative poster that has appropriate messages or quotes.

'Training workshops' for parent helpers or aides can be held. Booklets that set out guidelines for assisting children in their reading can be written and distributed to parents and aides.

Parent libraries can be established with a mixture of school-produced pamphlets, commercially produced material, and the many resource materials available from the Language Arts Resources Centres.

Summary

The books in this series contain some very important messages about the acquisition of language. There exists an even greater potential for enhancing children's progress in our schools if parents are given the opportunity to share this knowledge.

As schools develop their language programs, it is equally important to convey many other messages. For instance, although they may suspect that there are good educational reasons why their children go on excursions, parents still need to receive continual explanation and reassurance throughout the school year.

Schools need to stress the positive and participatory role of parents within the language processes. In this way, parents will realise the importance of continuing to be actively involved in their children's language development.

Schools can foster this participation by encouraging parents:

- to share books with their children;
- to encourage more explicit language forms by allowing children to carry verbal messages or detailed instructions;
- to encourage speculation and offer opinions when children are watching television;
- to allow children to own books and visit libraries;
- to encourage children to write letters to relatives;
- to respond positively to children's attempts and listen to what they have to say.

These are but a few of the many activities schools may need to explain and promote.

Similarly, there is a participatory role for parents in the school. In encouraging parents to take part in school activities, schools need again to give professional explanations, advice and reassurance so that parent helpers will readily perceive the value of sharing books, talking with children as they paint, participating in book conferences or helping with any of the numerous classroom activities.

In the past the teacher's goal was to have a silent classroom in a silent school. In the home, too, the rule was that 'children should be seen and not heard'. Today, teachers must share with parents the knowledge that:

> Language has a unique role in developing human learning; the higher processes of thinking are normally achieved by the interaction of a child's language behaviour with his other mental and perceptual powers.
>
> (*A Language for Life*, p. 519)

Language is a powerful learning medium. Only by parents and teachers, homes and schools, joining forces will the medium be harnessed.

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Further reading

Many books have been written about children's language development and the role parents play in promoting this development. Many parents seem intuitively to appreciate the value of the help they give their children, but some parents lack this confidence. Sometimes it is helpful for such parents to read what teachers and other parents have to say about language development and about learning to read. The following book-list provides an excellent basis for a parent library.

Leila Berg.

Reading and Loving.

Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

The author believes that the acquisition of reading ability and the enjoyment of books grow from a warm physical and emotional base. Her book explores the importance of the mother-child relationship, traces the varied ways in which babies learn to communicate and examines the powerful role that books can play in children's lives.

Dorothy Butler.

Babies Need Books.

Bodley Head, 1980.

Based on the author's child-centred experiences as teacher, mother and grandmother, this book demonstrates the importance of books in children's lives from babyhood, and how access to books, through parents and other adults, greatly increases children's chances of becoming happy and involved human beings. The six chapters deal with the reading needs of children from infancy to age six and include lists of books suitable for babies and young children.

Dorothy Butler and Marie Clay.

Reading Begins at Home.

Primary Education, 1979.

This book deals with the important role parents play in preparing children for reading. The authors show how well-prepared children seldom fail to read, and how in the pre-school years parents have opportunities to provide one-to-one learning situations.

Kornei Chukovsky.

From Two to Five.

Jacaranda Wiley, 1968.

The first part of this book, 'A Linguistic Genius', is an exciting discussion about how children learn and create with their own language. The book also deals with the importance of stories, fairy tales and poetry in children's lives.

Brian Cutting.

Reading Matters.

Shortland Publications, 1982.

This excellent booklet describes what happens in good reading programs and gives parents ideas about how children can be helped with reading at home. It concludes with an explanation of the reading process. Essential reading for teachers as well.

Education Department of South Australia.

Helping Your Child With Reading: a guide for parents.

South Australian Education Department Publications Branch, 1980.

A slim volume designed to help parents understand the reading process and to foster co-operation between home and school by showing parents how they can take an active part in their children's education.

Aileen Grundy.

Children's Novels: a guide for parents and teachers.

Dove Communications, 1978.

Parents and teachers will find this a valuable help in sharing the enjoyment of reading with children. The book offers a basis for selecting and sharing worthwhile children's literature and includes an alphabetical listing of over 50 writers with a wide range of titles.

Virginia Lowe.

Adult, Book, Child.

Australian Library Promotion Council, 1979.

An excellent handbook showing ways in which parents can use books with children right from birth, and giving information about authors and books to guide parents in choosing suitable material to read to and with children up to the age of about ten.

Norma J. McDiarmid, Mari A. Peterson and James R. Sutherland.

Loving and Learning.

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

Written for parents of infants and toddlers, this is an informative book about emotional and intellectual development from birth to age three. The six chapters deal with successive six-month periods of life from birth. Each chapter begins with an overview of what the infant is like at that particular stage, then focuses on suggested play and learning experiences to foster development.

Margaret Meek.

Learning to Read.

Bodley Head, 1982.

The author uses her experience as parent and teacher to help parents understand what is happening when a child is learning to read and to explain how parents can help. Each of the six chapters deals with a different stage of learning, from before five to fourteen-plus, and each has answers to the many kinds of questions parents ask about reading. There is a comprehensive book-list included in this very practical and highly readable book.

Diane Snowball (editor).

Helping Your Child to Read: a guide for parents.

Nelson, 1982.

This book was written by ten Australian authors who are experts in their respective fields of children's language. Parents are advised on ways to make reading a rewarding and pleasurable experience for themselves and their children. The book includes valuable book-lists to guide parents in helping children select suitable children's literature.

Pat Triggs.

Puffins for Parents: a guide to help you with your children's reading.

Penguin, 1980.

This practical guide to Puffin books is full of excellent suggestions and book titles to cater for children up to about thirteen years.

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